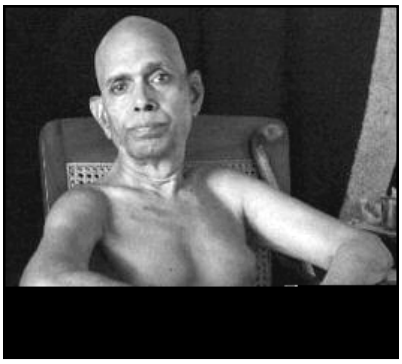


The Maharshi

NOV/DEC 2001 VOL.11, NO. 6

ENQUIRY AND SADHANA

Part II

The following is an excerpt from questions and answers exchanged between Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri D. C. Desai at Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India, on August 8, 1944, at 9 a.m. and published in the October 1969 issue of the Mountain Path.

D: I am often baffled and depressed during or outside my meditation by thinking that there are millions of souls who are either quite ignorant or quite innocent, and are suffering intolerable pains and tortures in this world, e.g., (a) starvation of the poor by famine, poverty or unemployment; (b) pain and suffering through diseases of ignorant people caused by ignorance of laws of hygiene, diet or poverty; (c) bombing of innocent women and children; (d) suffering through floods, earthquakes, etc., of innocent and poor persons; (e) killing of animals for food; (f) insects and lower animals being eaten up by higher animals in nature, and so on.

I try to convince myself that all this must be due to their bad karma in past lives, but doubts still arise as to how and by whom their freewill was so directed as to force them to commit such actions. If it was due to desire, why or how did they come to get it, or such tendencies originally? If it is due to *avidya*, *dehadhyas* (body idea), etc., how can they be held responsible for the same?

M: First find out whether the ego exists, who is depressed by these thoughts. Find out how you got the idea of the body, solve this problem of your ego, and then see if anything remains to be solved.

D: Is it helpful in the enquiry to sit in *siddhasana*, keeping the spine erect, sitting on deerskin, *kushasana*, etc. during the meditation, or are they not quite necessary? Will they expedite the progress?

M: The real *asana* is being established in the Self-Reality or the Source. Sit in your Self. Where can the Self go and sit? Everything sits in the Self. Find out the source of I and sit there. Do not have the idea that the Self cannot be realized without the help of *asanas*, etc. They are not at all necessary. The chief thing is to enquire and reach the source of the ego. These details such as posture, etc., may distract the mind towards them or to the body.

D: Which books are most helpful in *swadhyaya* (self-study) during spare time (for quick training of the mind for the enquiry)?

M: You may read whichever book you like. Self (*Atma*) is the real book. You can look into it whenever you like. Nobody can take it away. It is always at hand, to be read. Hold on to your Self in your spare time also, and then you can read any book.

D: If doubts, fears and worries harass me during meditation, how can they be most effectively removed?

M: Ask yourself "To whom do these doubts, fears and worries occur?" and they will vanish. Cease to pay attention to them. Pay attention to the Self within. Fears, etc., can only arise when there are two, or when anybody else exists apart from, or separate from, or outside of you. If you turn the mind inward towards the Self, fears, etc., will disappear.

If you try to remove a doubt or fear, another doubt or fear will arise. There will be no end to it. The best method to annihilate them is to ask "To whom do they occur?" and they will disappear. Destroying a tree by plucking its leaves one by one is impossible. Other

leaves will grow by the time you pluck a few. Remove the root of the tree — the ego — and the whole tree with its leaves and branches will be destroyed. Prevention is better than cure.

D: Should I look for the source within the body?

M: The ego arises within the body. Hence, in the first instance you may look within the body for its source. When you reach the source there will be no inside or outside, because the source or the Self is all-pervading. After realization everything will be inside the Self.

D: Is the source on the right side of the middle line of the chest?

M: The Heart is defined as the place from which the I-thought arises. Heart means the Center (of consciousness). It cannot be identified with any part of the physical body.

D: What can I do to increase the receptivity of the mind to your spiritual vibrations while sitting in the hall, and to increase the frequency and duration of the efforts at enquiry in the hall, or to ease such efforts?

M: Keep the mind quiet. That is enough. Sitting in this hall will help you. The purpose of efforts is to get rid of all efforts. The force will be clearly felt when the stillness is achieved. Spiritual vibrations exist everywhere. They will manifest when the mind is stilled.

D: Will it be helpful if I gaze from time to time on your eyes or face during the effort at meditation, or should I keep the eyes closed? If closed, should I concentrate them on the *ajna-chakra*, or deep down in the heart? When practicing the enquiry at one's own place should the eyes be closed or fixed on some object of devotion?

M: Look at your Self or *Atma* rather than anywhere else. The eyes may be kept open or closed. It is immaterial. There is only one I, whether you spell it 'I' or 'eye'. There is no point in opening or closing the eyes. Attention must be focused on the inner 'I'. You are not an 'I' that can be opened or closed. You may open or close the eyes according to your liking or inclination. It is immaterial, and not important. You will cease to think of the world when you think of the Self. If you are in a room and close your eyes and do not look out, it is immaterial whether you close the windows or keep them open. The body is the room; the eyes are the windows.

Looking at *ajna chakra*, etc., is not necessary in this method. It may be helpful in keeping the mind from going out towards external objects. Concentrate on the Self without which there are no *chakras*. They do not exist without you. You are all of them. All centers (*chakras*) are in the Heart. The Heart is not the *anahata chakra*. The latter is in the spinal cord. Heart is I.

Poetry, Music, Japa, Bhajana

D. Through poetry, music, *japa*, *bhajana*, the sight of beautiful landscapes, reading the lines of spiritual verses, etc., one experiences sometimes a true sense of all-unity. Is that feeling of deep blissful quiet (wherein the personal self has no place) the same as the entering into the heart of which Bhagavan speaks? Will practice thereof lead to a deeper *samadhi* and so ultimately to a full vision of the Real?

M. There is happiness when agreeable things are presented to the mind. It is the happiness inherent to the Self, and there is no other happiness. And it is not alien and afar. You are diving into the Self on those occasions which you consider pleasurable; that diving results in self-existent bliss. But the association of ideas is responsible for foisting that bliss on other things or occurrences while, in fact, that bliss is within you. On these occasions you are plunging into the Self, though unconsciously. If you do so consciously, with the conviction that comes of the experience that you are identical with the happiness which is verily the Self, the one Reality, you call it Realization. I want you to dive consciously into the Self, *i.e.*, into the heart. —*Maharshi's Gospel*

Darshan and Upadesha at Skandashram

By Rohit Vaidya

On the morning of the final day of our visit to Sri Ramanasram, we climbed Arunachala to Skandasram and Virupaksha cave. Skandashram consists of a central building with some other rooms adjoining it. Within the central structure, there are three rooms — an outer hall, the inner Skandashram cave, and off to the side, there is a small room in which Bhagavan is said to have stayed. In this small room, lengthwise against one wall, there is a concrete bench with a sloping back where one can recline.

While in that small room, facing the bench, I experienced an awe-evoking vision of Bhagavan.[1] What I beheld was not a human figure as such, but rather a pure light and effulgence in a somewhat diffuse, oval-like form, seated on the concrete bench against the sloping back of the bench. It was a vibrant sentience or awareness and, associated with it, was a very clear and strong intuition that there was nothing that needed to be accomplished by this Being, that there were no karmas it had to perform. It was complete and whole, in and by itself.

I prostrated at the foot of the bench and quietly left in awe and wonder.

At the time, what came to my mind, which seemed to reflect the character of this vision, were the words of the Sanskrit mantra from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*:

Om poornamadah poornamidam poornat poornamudachyate poornasya poornamaadaaya poornamevaavashishyate

"That is perfect — this is perfect. What comes from perfection truly is perfect. What remains after perfection from perfection is also perfect."

Later, after returning home from Sri Ramanasram to the USA, I found accurate descriptions of this vision of Bhagavan as pure light and effulgence in the following verses from Ganapati Muni's "Sri Ramana Chatvarimsat":

Gana gudha sahasra karena yatha tanu kanchuka gupta mahaa mahasaa

"Whose beatific effulgence is hidden by the sheath of the gross body, like the blazing sun hidden behind the clouds." —*Verse 2*

Pasyan visvamapidamullasati yo visvasya paare parah

"The One who, though seeing the world, shines as the Supreme Truth, transcending the world creation." —*Verse 22*

Tava tanurjjvala tyanagha vidyutaa

"O Spotless Being! Thy form blazes with pure light." —*Verse 29*

I also found in Bhagavan's own words the explanation for my very strong feeling that there were no deeds required in this state of completeness and wholeness.

Nashta maanas-otkrsht yoginahah krtyam asti kim swasthitim yataahaa

"His mind being thus extinguished, the great Yogi who is established in the Supreme Truth has no more Karma to do, for He has attained the Natural State." —*Upadesa Saaram, Verse 15*

Ahankrtim yo lasati grasitvaa kim tasya kaaryam parishishtamasti kinchidvijaanaati sa natman'onyata tasya sthitim bhaavayitum kshamah kah

"What remains there for him to do who swallows the ego and shineth forth? Separate from the Self, there is nought to him. His condition to conceive, who is there so bold?" —*Sat Darshanam, Verse 31*

1. To make it perfectly clear, the vision was impressed on my mind while standing in front of the bench, just inside the threshold of the room. It was not a perception of an image of Bhagavan on that actual concrete bench.

Although the last question in the preceding verse might be rhetorical, I must say that I have only sought here to relate my experience as faithfully and truthfully as I can convey in words. And in seeking to explain what I saw and felt, I have found far more lucid and apt descriptions in the words of Ganapati Muni and Bhagavan himself.

Prior to this, I have generally felt the grace of Bhagavan's presence at an essentially personal level. This *darshan* at Skandasram was a little surprising in that it was non-personal. There was no impression of an individual as such, only a completeness and wholeness in which there is no other. Only pure, effulgent light and awareness of and in itself — yet somehow also aware of the world.

Upon re-reading this narrative, a skeptical part of me has to ask, "Did this truly occur?" After all, in such matters, it is very easy for the mind to delude or deceive itself; and that might have been possible if it had been only an image that was perceived. But what really bestowed authenticity and meaning for me was its palpable feeling of vibrant sentience and the associated profound understanding of that state of Being. That still evokes awe, and silences the mind.

Ultimately, any vision is within the realm of duality and is not of the Supreme Truth. Paradoxically, perhaps, this too was implicit in this vision.

Advent at Arunachala

New York Ashrama

Three times yearly, a large circle of Ashrama family and friends gathers to celebrate one of three events related to the life of Sri Bhagavan: his *jayanti*, his advent at Sri Arunachala, and his *mahanirvana*.

His advent at Arunachala was celebrated at the New York Arunachala Ashrama on Sunday, September 9th. Devotees prayed, meditated, chanted, cooked, cleaned, decorated, hung flowers and presented fruits at Sri Bhagavan's shrine from early morning.

The celebration began when all gathered joined in the joyous strains of "Sri Arunachala Akshara Mana Malai" or "The Marital Garland of Letters to Sri Arunachala," the bridegroom. Celebrating the mystic union of the mind and Heart, this hymn was especially fitting to the occasion! Next, "The 108 Names of Sri Bhagavan" were reverentially intoned and flowers offered at the shrine. Dennis Hartel welcomed all and described the first advent at Arunachala celebration that took place at Sri Ramanasramam fifty-five years ago. He also showed a short video clip of that occasion, filmed by the India Information Service.

Bhajans and recitations, which also included songs learned by the children at Sri Ramana's Children's Ashrama, ensued. After aarati, a feast of Indian delicacies prepared by devotees was served by the Ashram 'kids' (as they prefer to be called).

As we draw near to the 30th anniversary of our own first celebration of Sri Bhagavan's advent at Sri Arunachala here in NYC and Nova Scotia, inspired by the enthusiasm of Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat, we could not but help reflect upon how things seem to come full cycle. We who had come at that time were then young adults aflame with the ideal of realizing the Self 'today'! And now, we are surrounded by a new generation who, by Sri Bhagavan's grace and the example of their parents, have become immersed in Sri Bhagavan's teaching of devotion, service and discrimination. Sri Bhagavan has said, "Those who come here (meaning to Him) are like the prey caught in the the jaws of the tiger. They cannot get away."

The beauty of his grace, which he called the grace of Sri Arunachala, is indeed an unfathomable mystery which reveals itself in manifold ways throughout our lives.

To properly mention all the names of those who contributed to or participated in this special event would require the entire newsletter!

—Evelyn K. Saphier

Letters and Comments

World Trade Center

Hello to everyone at Arunachala Ashrama. I hope all are well there. The attack last week got me thinking (mistake!). I know I am not the doer. But who is? Is it God, and if so how could he do such an evil act? I hope you can answer this for me. Thank you. Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya.

Devotee in Texas

Asked about why there is good and evil Sri Bhagavan said: "They are relative terms. There must be a subject to know the good and evil. That subject is the ego. Trace the source of the ego. It ends in the Self. The source of the ego is God."

At the same time, Sri Bhagavan had great compassion for suffering humanity. He lived his life for the sole purpose of removing this suffering, not through monetary means nor through philanthropy, but by giving seekers the understanding and grace to realize their true nature beyond all limitations and suffering.

Asked why the creation is so full of sorrow and evil, Maharshi said: "It is God's will!"

D.: Why does God will it so?

M.: It is inscrutable. No motive can be attributed to that Power, no desire, no end to achieve can be asserted of that one Infinite, All-wise and All-powerful Being. God is untouched by activities, which take place in His presence — compare the sun and the world activities. There is no meaning in attributing responsibility and motive to the One before it became many. But God's will for the prescribed course of events is a good solution to the problem of freewill (vexata quaestio). If the mind is restless on account of a sense of the imperfect or unsatisfactory character of what befalls us or what is committed or omitted by us, then it is wise to drop the sense of responsibility and freewill by regarding ourselves as the ordained instruments of the All-wise and All-powerful, to do and suffer as He pleases. Then He carries all the burdens and gives us peace."

Death is certain for all, whether it be by violence or by quietly slipping away in sleep. There is no way to escape the revolving cycle of birth and death, except through the knowledge of our real Self. To gain that, we are constantly being prodded by events that remind us of our physical mortality and the consequent suffering of embodiment. Once the lesson is learned, we are free. We can only hope that this tragic event turns our attention with greater intensity to the real purpose of life here on earth — Self Realization.

Editor

Following the tragic events of September 11, we received many e-mails and calls from devotees, friends and well-wishers the world over. A few of them are printed below.

"Please contact us as soon as you can to make sure that you're alright after these horrible terrorist attacks on America.

"We are watching the outcome of this terrible tragedy 24-hours-a-day and showing our deepest sympathies over everything that happened. With love in Sri Bhagavan, Your friends from Belgrade."

"Last year on this date, 10th October, Ramani, Ramanan and I landed in New York, and what a warm welcome you gave us! Thanks to all our devotee friends there and you in particular, our trip was memorable. Ramani and I will always cherish memories of the pleasant times we had with you.

"Ramanan was here on vacation (after 2 1/2 years) on the fateful Tuesday, September 11 when tragedy of unimaginable proportions hit New York. Our having visited and admired the WTC less than a year back and Ramanan's being here at that time, made us feel the immensity of the tragedy all the more. Let us hope and pray that justice will be dispensed firmly, and that the resultant lessons learned will ensure peace based on tolerance and human values. On this *Punarvasu* day, I send best wishes to you and all our friends there."

—V.S. Mani, Sri Ramanasramam

"How big a tragedy it is! It is really unbelievable! Deep consolations to all the victims and the American people. And are you and the devotees all safe?

I wish that no devotees have been hurt or missing in the disaster. With regards, yours in Sri Bhagavan,"

— Daesung Sunim, Seoul, Korea

"I was glad to know that Mamtha was able to hear your voice yesterday. I read the *Self-Realization* book this morning and it opened up to the chapter "Robbery at the Ashram." Sri Bhagavan's infinitely calm words helped me start the day. Please let us know if we can be of any help to our friends at this difficult time. In Sri Bhagavan,"

—Prakash, Mamtha, Virginia

"How are you? Here we are recovering from last week's horrible events.... Everything was as in a dream. What a terrible thing. How many parents waved their kids off to school and never returned. This last thought was haunting my mind. Even now I shudder as I write. What did they do so terrible that this was their punishment. Why are we witnessing these things. Even though I clung to Bhagavan for support and everything else, I seem to have lost him somewhere. No, I think that I have lost my moorings. I seem to be drifting, waiting, but I don't know for what. After a long time I felt near to him only last night after I read the introduction to *In Days of Great Peace,* by Arthur Osborne. He says that Bhagavan is called 'Bhagavan' because it means the Divine. The Divine One, how are we to bear this? I know that death is certain for the body. I don't fear that. Even during Sri Bhagavan's time, atrocities were taking place in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. It used to confuse me, why do these things happen. Why doesn't He put a stop to it? After all, aren't we the children of the same father. When will we think that all of us are one? Where is the greatness in killing and maiming. Only these last few days I tell Bhagavan, "Thy will be done." Who am I to bully him. But it is so hard. I pray for all of us, the people, the leaders and the victims of the attacks. I also pray for the ones who are out to hurt. I pray for them especially. I pray for Bhagavan to address them most lovingly. 'Go! Where can I go? I shall always be here,' says Bhagavan.

—from Washington, D.C

"Greetings to you in this difficult time. My thoughts go out to everyone who has suffered from Tuesday's events, which is really the whole world, but especially to those most personally touched by this. And of course all the devotees/friends of the Ashram in New York. I remember reading Bhagavan's words, "Whatever is, is Peace." We can only continue to work to realize that Peace which is the Self, which Bhagavan manifested so beautifully."

—David Klegon, Boston

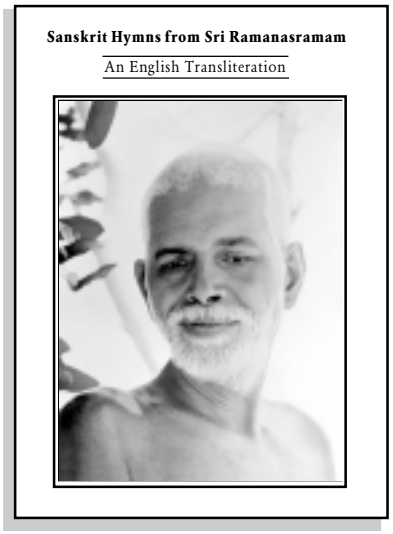
"In this era of sorrow, 'one misery, one remedy,' according to Ramana's words, receive all my compassionate attention." *—Geeta Furini, France*

"Dear friends in Ramana, Thank you for your report. When I read this report and about all the things that happened to the people of the U.S., and particularly your friends there, I feel extremely sad. The first thought came to me is that when the son of M. Bose died, Sri Ramana was there in body and consoled him. Now the family of Swarana Chalasani need the presence of our Master. He is really our unique refuge.

"Today at noon, all over France, people observed three minutes of silence, to be with all U.S. people. I was in the meeting room with some high staff and the General Director of my bank. During these three minutes of silence, I thought of our Master Ramana as He is the real definition of True Silence. I was happy to be in silence with the General Director, because he was born in NYC. He thanked all of us. It seems to me that I was in NYC with all the people there. Peace, Love and Grace of Ramana for all of you." *—Richard Selvame, France*

As soon as I heard about the WTC disaster, about 11:30 a.m. our time, I tried calling the Ashrama and couldn't get through, so I was relieved to get your e-mail sent at 2:55 p.m. Did Radha and other people you know who worked in or around the buildings get home safely? Joe called from Halifax and said many planeloads of people destined for the U. S. were stranded at the airport there. He wanted to know if we could offer the Ashram as a place for them to stay. Of course I said it was all right. He was going to try to contact the Red Cross to offer it. I Haven't heard from him since. Please keep us posted."

—Darlene Karamanos, Nova Scotia



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Ramana Satsangs

For some time now satsangs with recitations, songs and meditation have been going on in a few places near large cities. Some of them are weekly, others monthly. If you would like to attend any of these, please call or write for more information.

BOSTON — David & Anna Klegon
(617-928-1487 / dklgon@rcn.com)

DETROIT, ANN ARBOR — Prasanth & Shobana Visweswеran (734-327-0109 /prashvis@hotmail.com)

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Prakash & Mamtha Adiseshan
(703-502-4982 / adiseshan@worldnet.att.net)

Jayanti in New York

The 122nd Jayanti
of
Sri Ramana Maharshi
will be celebrated in the New York Arunachala Ashrama
on
Sunday, January 6, 2002
The program will begin at 11:00 A.M.
for more information, please call
(718) 575-3215